

SENSORY IMPAIRED FUND MANUAL

Introduction

A.) During a meeting with a group of administrators from school districts, a discussion was held to consider how to design an implement a fund to neutralize the financial difference experienced by school districts that refer students at MSB or MSD versus if they were educated in the district. The eligibility procedures have been designed to be simple to perform, both for the districts and the division. In general, districts already maintain all the information needed to apply for recovery of funds.

B.) The purpose of this manual is to provide administrative procedures to public school districts seeking reimbursement for educational costs associated with serving students who qualify as deaf, blind, or deaf/blind as defined by the State Plan for Special Education 2001. The “Sensory Impaired Fund” (hereinafter referred to as “the fund”), is to be used to pay approvable special education and related service costs for students with disabilities when such costs exceed two (2) times the serving district’s current expenditure per eligible pupil for the year in which services were provided. Subject to the availability of funds, the Division reserves the right to increase the two (2) times current expenditure per eligible pupil. Districts may apply no later than October 31 following the close of a school year in which approvable costs were incurred. All applications shall be made on forms provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Special Education. Questions should be addressed to Director, Funds Management Section, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Special Education, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102.

General Provisions

A.) Eligible Applicant Districts and Students – A Missouri public school district which directly serves a student(s) who qualify as defined by the State Plan for Part B of IDEA and for whom there are educational costs may apply to recover expenses from the fund. To be eligible for the fund, all students must have a primary diagnosis of deaf, blind, or deaf/blind and not qualify for the Severe Disabilities Services Fund. In order to be considered for reimbursement of educational costs, the applying school district must show actual approvable expenditures for individual students, which exceed two (2) times the district’s current expenditure per eligible pupil for the year in which services were provided. (See paragraph two of introduction.) A separate application is required for each student for whom reimbursement is sought. (This quotient is derived from a calculation from data contained in the district’s Annual Secretary of the Board Report (ASBR) and core data. The eligible pupil count is the quotient of the number of attendance hours divided by the session hours. Retroactive adjustments may be made to payments to correspond with changes made to the district’s post-audit data.)

B.) Approvable Educational Expenditures – The Sensory Impaired Fund application includes approvable expenditures, which may be reimbursed by the fund. They are the only expenditures, which may be included in the calculation of total educational cost required to serve a student for whom an application for recovery of educational costs is submitted. Any and all expenditures claimed on an application are subject to audit and further requests for clarification by the division. The division reserves the right to disapprove any and all expenditures submitted for reimbursement which are not documented as requested or do not qualify as approvable educational costs.

C.) Deadline for Annual Application – An original, properly completed form for claiming reimbursement from the fund must be postmarked no later than October 31 in order to be reimbursed for expenditures made during the preceding school year. (Reimbursement may be provided only after actual costs have been incurred for the delivery of a service, program or purchase/lease of a product.) Costs for extended school year (ESY) services should be allocated to the fiscal year(s) in which they are accrued in the district’s financial accounting system.

D.) Forms for Application – Claims for reimbursement of educational costs must be submitted on the “Sensory Impaired Fund Application” form approved by the Division of Special Education. At the discretion of the division, applications may be submitted by paper form, fax or World Wide Web (form retrieval only).

E.) Reconsideration of Denied Expenditures – An applicant may seek reconsideration of expenditures denied for reimbursement by the Director of Funds Management. Requests for reconsideration must be made in writing to the Assistant Commissioner of Special Education, Division of Special Education, within thirty (30) calendar days following the date of the notice of approval or denial. Decisions of the Assistant Commissioner of Special Education shall be made within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of the reconsideration request.

F.) Payment and Possible Proration of Sensory Impaired Fund Payments – The division will sum all approved reimbursable expenditures prior to distribution of funds following the annual receipt of applications on October 31. If there are insufficient funds to pay all approvable expenditures, payments may be prorated based on the funds available.

G.) Service(s) – As used herein, this is a generic term, which refers to any approvable expenditure and may include programs, evaluations, therapies, equipment/devices, instructional materials, etc.

H.) Effect of Fund on School District Financial Responsibility – Nothing contained in these regulations or the administration of the Sensory Impaired Fund alleviates a public school district’s obligation under state and federal law or regulation to provide special education and related services necessary for the provision of FAPE. This obligation is in no way contingent upon the receipt of funds from the Sensory Impaired Fund.

Approvable Sensory Impaired Fund Expenditure Categories – Approvable expenditures are organized by categories of service. General and category-specific rules, which qualify the reimbursable services, are stated. Services, which are not represented in the following categories, may be considered by the division for reimbursement on a case-by-case basis.

Rules Applicable to All Service Categories

A.) Services must be provided in the least restrictive setting/manner appropriate for the student, as reflected in the IEP.

B.) Services must be necessary to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), as reflected in the IEP.

C.) Services must be specifically included on a current individualized education program (IEP).

D.) In the judgment of the Division of Special Education, the services and the method of delivery must be considered and efficient and effective means (e.g., method of delivery, frequency, duration, acceptable practice, ect.) of addressing the needs of the needs of the student, as indicated in his/her most recent diagnostic summary and/or IEP.

E.) Expenditures are approved based on the following service categories, whether provided through district employees or via purchase of services, e.g., sections (2) through (8).

F.) The cost for a direct education service (including professional consultative services) must be allocated in the proportion to which the student whose services are being charged is to the total number of students served.

G.) Services and funding available from other public and private sources must be applied before those from the fund and are not to be included in the calculation of total educational cost. Co-pays or

deductibles for accessing such benefits may be included in the calculation of total educational cost. The use of private health insurance benefits to pay portions of the cost of related services must be done with the informed consent of the parent or primary beneficiary of the insurance, and not negatively affect future benefits or costs to the insuree. Public health insurance benefits must be accessed whenever possible.

H.) Schools must comply with all applicable laws and regulations in the procurement of services.

I.) Written requests for prior approval of expenditures (prior to a district incurring an expense) may be made to the division. Doing so is encouraged for significant expenditures.

Basic Special Education

A.) Allocated cost of special education teacher and aide, if any.

B.) Allocated cost of materials and equipment required to provide the basic special education program.

1. The principal method to be used for making allocations of direct education service, material and equipment expenditures is the proportion which the student(s) qualifying for the fund is of the total number served by a teacher, aide, etc. However, depending on unique situations, the division may, at its discretion, apply an alternate method, including the following:

the proportion of total time served, or
the proportion of time or quantity relative to the total, or
others which may be deemed appropriate by the division.

Related and Other Specialized Ancillary Services

A.) This category includes related or other specialized services, which are provided by staff or as contracted.

B.) Related service unit costs must be regionally competitive.

C.) Includes specialized or individualized transportation. (Equipment should be placed under the category of specialized equipment.)

D.) Medical service is reimbursable only if evaluation-related.

Professional Development

A.) Monies from the fund may be used for professional development activities essential for staff directly assigned to a student to provide IEP-related services to the student for whom educational cost reimbursement is being requested. General professional development expenditures, e.g., those which are not specialized and based on the qualifying students' IEP needs, are not approvable.

Specialized Equipment

A.) The division, at its discretion, may determine the most cost effective basis for reimbursement.

B.) It may consider the leasehold cost, purchase price, and useful life, among other relevant criteria in its decision. It too may prorate reimbursement based on these criteria.

C.) Depending on cost and useful life, the division may recover equipment purchased through the fund for transfer to another student in the state.

D.) No reimbursement will be provided for the initial development of or major modifications to custom software. Reimbursement may be sought for minor modifications to existing software if such are required by the student's IEP.

E.) Costs for equipment or for adaptations and modifications to such are reimbursable if documented in the IEP to be required for the student to benefit from special education and related services. Costs must be allocated if equipment is used by multiple students.

Out-of-District Day or Residential Schooling

A.) Must show evidence of financial participation by other public agencies, if appropriate.

B.) Must show evidence that the district could not provide an appropriate service locally or by regional partnering.

C.) Use of out-of-school-district educational placement must be documented to be required by the IEP, and if relevant, a due process decision issued by the State Board of Education or a court of competent jurisdiction. Out-of-district payments may be made only for placements in other Missouri public school districts or in private agencies approved by the MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Special Education. Funding for out-of-state educational placement will be considered only when there is no appropriate service available in Missouri. (Exceptions may be considered where districts are close to or border other states.)

Capital Facility Renovation

A.) At its discretion, the division may give consideration to requests to make minor modification to existing facilities which a) exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guide (ADAAG) and b) are documented to be essential for the student to benefit from special education and related services. Reimbursement for such expenditures may be prorated on a case-by-case basis. All such requests must receive prior written approval from the division.

Specific Expenditure Exclusion

A.) No capital construction or renovation beyond that specified herein, including leases for facilities.

B.) No indirect or allocable costs for administration or support services. Only direct special education service costs shall be included in the calculation of total educational cost.

FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONTACT:
Division of Special Education – Funds Management Section

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